### **Concept Note: The NetHope – UMSI Internship Program**

**Edward G. Happ, March, 2017**

**1. Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to propose a partnership between the University of Michigan School of Information (UMSI) and NetHope in order to facilitate internships for UMSI students at NetHope and its 50 international member organizations. There are three aspects for this: practical educational experience for students, the value-add of information savvy students for NGO projects and fieldwork, and the placement of the next cadre of information technology graduates in the nonprofit sector.

**2. Background**

Some of the long-established roles for internship programs are (1) front-line experience in organizations of interest, (2) mutual “test driving” for students and org’s, (3) a strong step in the recruiting process for employment opportunities for graduates. The humanitarian sector has supported interns in the program areas, such as public health, but technology interns are rare. With the persistent underfunding of IT in most nonprofit organizations and the coming revolution of rethinking most business as digital enterprises, the time is ripe for creating a feeder system of IT talent for nonprofit work.

NetHope is the premier organization at the intersection of technology and nonprofit work. It is the go-to organization of technology leaders and practitioners in the humanitarian development, relief and conservation spaces. As the co-founder of NetHope, my joining a major university with an international student body creates an opportunity to bring the academic community and nonprofit worlds together for mutual benefit.

Indeed, the mission of the University of Michigan, School of Information is “we create and share knowledge so that people will use information -- with technology -- to build a better world.” For NetHope, it is “We enable cross-sector collaboration between nonprofits and innovative companies to develop better programs, mitigate risks, and scale benefits for greater impact in the communities in which we work. Our collaborative model uses public & private partnerships to deliver information technology solutions to the developing world.” It is time to bring these two organizations together and develop the nonprofit technology leaders of the future.

**3. Program Features**

Three roles for the UMSI – NetHope Internship Program would provide the potential starting points:

1. *Providing a talent pool of technology savvy students* – UMSI has an elite student base at the bachelors and masters level from countries throughout the world. They have a keen interest in helping to solve problems that have real-world impact. They also have a strong desire to gain valuable work experience that prepares them for the job market.
2. *Providing the “match-making” of nonprofit needs and student talent* – NetHope is in a unique position to solicit and refine member IT needs and match them with students’ qualifications and interests. NetHope is also in an excellent position to manage this program among its portfolio of member programs. In addition, providing a virtual forum for interns to share ideas and challenges fits well with its collaboration model.
3. *Providing the funding for interns who are placed at NetHope members* – The UMSI Office of Career Development has the funding to assist student interns working internationally and domestically in public sector, high-impact opportunities. There is a strong precedence for this with the current Korean internship program in Seoul and an established internship program with local municipalities. In addition, UMSI and NetHope would jointly seek additional funding to grow and enhance the program and its management.

 **4. The Audience**

The needs and potential may be segmented into four audiences:

1. *The university student population* is strongly interested in humanitarian and conservation work, and the application of digital technologies to amplify the solutions for social issues. However, they often lack the experience to apply their learning and interests in real-world contexts, especially in the developing world. Students can benefit from experiencing technology contexts in other cultures and helping solve real problems.
2. *The School’s Office of Career Development* is keenly interested in facilitating students’ engagement in meaningful internship experiences that enhance their education, and leveraging that experience for employment in fulfilling careers. The nonprofit sector is a large and growing segment that needs new talent to support that growth.
3. *NetHope Members* increasingly use digital technologies for the planning, delivery and monitoring of their field programs. However, most NGOs lack sufficient investment in field IT, and a fair portion of this is IT talent. They can benefit from an internship program that allows them to expand their use of IT, especially in running field innovation trials.
4. *Technology corporations and their employees* have a strong desire to see IT used that has humanitarian and conservation impact in the world. Having strong information technology graduates employed in nonprofit organizations, which they continue to support, will enhance that participation.
5. *Additional audiences* – these include researchers and government organizations who wish to include front-line students in research projects at humanitarian and other nonprofit organizations.

**5. The Proposal – the NetHope-UMSI Internship Program**

Creating a joint program between an international membership organization and a major university is a natural fit, both in terms of a focused interest area among faculty and students, and as a service to the nonprofit and for-profit sectors. A NetHope – UMSI partnership can create an internship experience that goes well-beyond the summer or semester assignments. Such a program would help build the brand of a both organizations, and their technology corporation partners, that see themselves at the intersection of people, information and technology.

What we propose is an initial proof-of-concept phase in 2017. Based on that experience, we would look to scale up the program. Here are the possible phases:

1. Phase 0 – Sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or letter of intent when Lauren Woodman, NetHope CEO, is at UMSI on April 28 to give the commencement address.
2. Phase 1 – proof-of-concept phase in 2017, placing 3-5 UMSI students at NetHope member organizations.
3. Phase 2 – scale-up the program at UMSI in winter 2018.
4. Phase 3 – organize and pilot a placement program for matching UMSI graduates with nonprofit sector jobs
5. Phase 4 – expand the program to other University of Michigan schools, especially engineering and computer science.
6. Phase 5 – expand to additional universities

We will jointly approach technology companies to support the establishment and expansion of this program.

**6. Next Steps**

The following steps should be considered:

1. Gauging the interest among NetHope members, students and technology companies for such a program
2. Determining estimated costs and funding opportunities
3. Appointing the director/manager for the program at NetHope
4. Discussing the NGO IT needs and types of projects/roles where IT students can best be engaged.

**7. For further Information, please contact:**

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